Letters to the editor—the readers write

11/23/85

Weisberg: 'Meachum's corruption of reality'

On 11/11 I criticized Roy Meachum's "yellow journalism" as irresponsible, deliberate misrepresentation, pontification and sometimes simply untruthful. I concluded with a caution, "He claims concern over the truly dangerous situation in the middle-east."

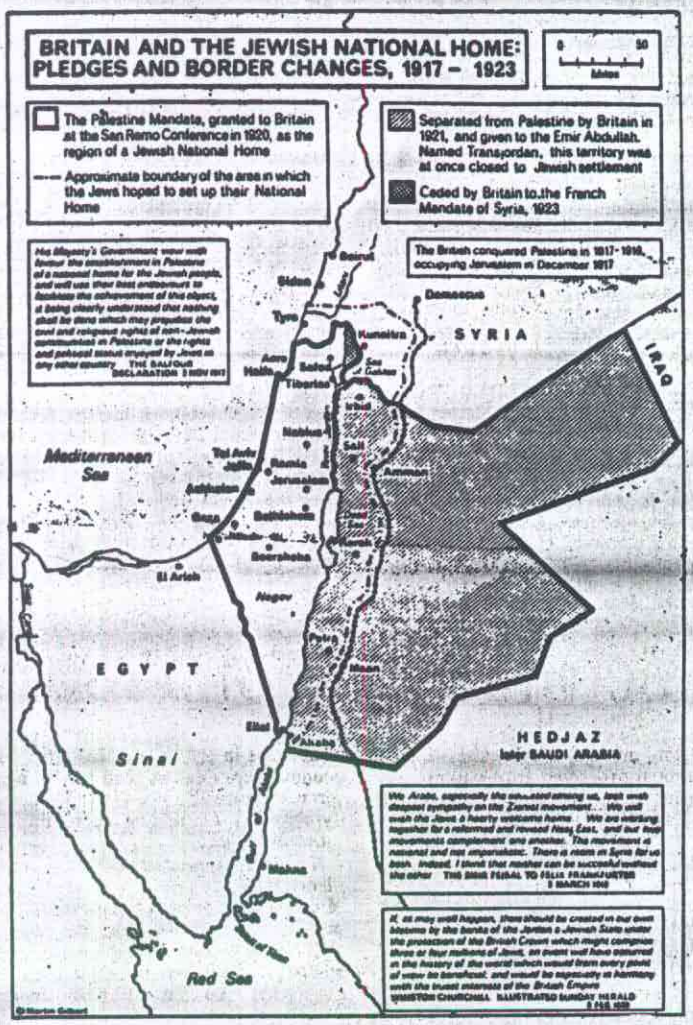
I do hope that before he pretends further omniscience in the complicated area he does try to learn more about the actualities, historical, recent and present. Otherwise he'll do neither his reputation nor his readers any good." Apparently taking this caution as a challenge, which it was not, in his column "Israeli cooperation needed," Meachum proves that my criticisms were too understated and he tortures fact into anti-Israeli propaganda and into what amounts to deliberate anti-semitism: Jews are responsible for the plight of the hostages of the terrorists/assassins he continues to defend.

Defends to the point where the assassins/terrorists/common murderers/kidnappers are no more than "hostage takers" who are to be completely indulged.

Both inherent and basic to Meachum's corruption of reality is the big-power pretense hated throughout the world that the only people who count are big-power citizens, in this case Americans. He has no concern at all for those who are the usual victims of these subhumans who terrorize the world and abuse and even murder the innocents, none for the Kuwaitis those he defends continue to try to blackmail.

Only if Israel (read Jews) give in to perpetual terror will the Americans be freed, according to Meachum. And, he says, "The government of Israel has not been (as) cooperative; it continues to send its jets freely over Lebanon in violation of international law." Meachum as secretary of state, as international jurist. *What* international law, your omniscience, when there is a state of war only because all Arab/Moslem countries other than Egypt perpetuate a state of war with Israel for 37 years? A different "international law" than permits Syria (which he also defends/extols) to occupy much if not most of the same Lebanon? Other than the one under which the United States sent marines there on several occasions?

Meachum also has Israel admitting that it invaded Syria, "The Israelis report they shot down two Syrian migs (sic) over Syrian soil." This is fabrication and the Israelis said no such thing. While Syria has yet to admit that its jets were shot down, it was over the stronghold of the terrorists in southern Lebanon, where the Israelis have openly



Map is from an article, "Partitioning Palestine," by Ahron Klieman in the 6/30/83 *Jerusalem Post*. It and another map are from a British book on "The Arab-Israeli Conflict." If it interests you I can get the complete article from the friend who was in Jerusalem when it was published. The painful truth, as I tried to warn Meachum, is truly complicated and the situation there is no fraught with great danger for the entire world, not just either Israel or the United States or both, I think it is a great disservice to any segment, no matter how small or our people to mislead them in any way.

and for a long time flown observation flights, to protect themselves from the slaughter of their wives, children in school and seniors. As today's *Washington Post*, which lacks Meachum's crystal ball and imagination but has a reporter in Syria states, "Israel has said the dogfight took place when Syrian jets attacked a regular Israeli reconnaissance flight over the Bekaa Valley of eastern Lebanon near the Syrian border." Not *over* Syria, and *not* with Syria having *any* internal-law justification of self-defense for being in or over Lebanon.

More than the usual cloud imposed by his imagination blurred Meachum's crystal ball in "Washington backtracked on its public statements (not negotiating with terrorists); it is up to its hips in negotiations." He actually says this in the same paragraph that concludes, "the White House ... fed back its standard line: 'no negotiations.' " (I am not a defender of the Reagan administration but a less blatantly partisan, less anti-semitic Meachum might remember the history of which I reminded him, that after trying to deal with the Tripolitanian pirates U.S. policy became "millions for defense but not one cent for tribute," and, within the international law Meachum says does not exist wiped them out.)

Meachum even accuses the Israelis (again, read Jews) of deliberately trying to ruin the truly compassionate and courageous Waite effort by saying what is a gross lie, that the Israeli planes invaded Syria "this week as Waite was returning to Beirut." And if Israel tries to defend its own people, as it does and has without any change in its conduct for years, that, according to Meachum, "cannot be justified under any circumstances; but when they continue while efforts are underway to free the American hostages, they present a callous flaunting of concern for the best interests of Tel Aviv's principal ally, the United States." Aside from the fact that there is no reason to believe that capitulation to the blackmail of terrorists/assassins/murderers will accomplish anything other than encouraging them, which is long-standing United States policy that Reagan did not invent, this is indecent and approximates the propaganda of Goebbels. And if Meachum had any knowledge of the actualities in that area, of the great number of children in school and other innocents slaughtered by terrorists invading Israel from that area, he could not have written this slander except as propaganda, as anti-semitism, which it is, whatever impelled him.

Inherent in this column, too, is defense and justification of those he never gets around to calling terrorists and their blackmail, which he espouses: "obviously, they resolved to end their waiting. Why else would they permit (his word, actually) the hostages to send those letters" asking for capitulation to the terrorists? *Permit?* All four to write similar letters after all this time at the same time? All saying the same thing? All satisfying the assassins? Permit, indeed! Not ordered, of course! Not for furthering terror. Not for further efforts at blackmail. Those Meachum defends and can't bring himself to refer to as assassins or terrorists have in his propaganda become compassionate for they are allowing "a French heart-specialist" to be "standing by to treat a captive countryman reportedly gravely ill." Standing by "*only* with an innocent Frenchman "gravely ill?" Not to provide *immediate* medical care? Not even to release him, with other victims still captive and others available as long as anyone remains in Lebanon or, as we've seen, on the high seas or in airplanes or in autos and buses? This addition subhuman mistreatment of the "gravely ill" is to Meachum something "positive."

Meachum pretends that there is a Lebanese government that controls Lebanon and prevents attacks on Israel from its territory, none of which is true. He refers to Lebanon as "frequently attacked" (read by Jews) and as "volatile." The truth is that Lebanon has been torn by fratricide for years, with many *Lebanese* forces in constant battle with each other. As I write this, Terry Waite himself is under siege in an office building, no Jews in either of the contending forces. Lebanon's most terrible plight is the direct result of the terrorism of those Meachum defends, the Arafat terrorists who were driven out of Jordan, where King Hussein had given them sanctuary, when they tried to capture Jordan from him. So, they tried to take Lebanon over, and those inspired by the Khomani followers — remember those who kept the American embassy personnel captive in Iran, Meachum? — add to the fratricide. Lebanon's real trouble comes not from being "frequently attacked" by Israel but from its internal factions and the Arafats still remaining. Israel has limited itself to self-defense as it sees self-defense, and neither Meachum nor I have the right to tell it how to defend itself from almost four decades of terrorism based largely in Lebanon.

Before Meachum rewrites more history in his assault on the knowledge and understanding of your readers, I think they ought to understand that there *is* a Palestinian state and it is Jordan. England made promises to both Arabs and Jews but it kept its promise to the Arabs only when, after World War I, it took the Palestine territory from the Ottoman empire, Turkey, which has sided with Germany. It then established the Arab state of *Trans*-Jordan in the part of Palestine that was across the Jordan River and it without consultation with the people put the Emir Abdullah in charge. Hussein confused the actuality further by eliminating the "Trans" from the name of his state, to hide the fact that it is the part of Palestine across the Jordan from what was to have been the Israeli state pursuant to the commitment on which England renegged. And Jordan is more than twice the size of Israel.

After wrapping himself in the mantle of American journalism Meachum has again desecrated its noble principles. Writers, like all Americans, have the right to hold any belief, no matter how wrong or even evil. But writers, unlike others, have the burden of being honest, truthful and accurate. Propaganda, especially incitations to race hatred, is *not* American journalism, is *not* our tradition. In response to the caution that he has been irresponsible and less than factual and truthful Meachum, with abuses of fact and truth not fully documented in this already long letter, compounds his errors of the past and in thinly-disguised partisanship and bias

becomes a propagandist rather than a reporter or an expressor of opinions and in this column, no matter how he conceives himself, he is an anti-semite. That in itself is genuinely evil and in all this evil, in which he claims, from the headline down, that only Israeli cooperation is needed to obtain the release of the victims of this new barbarity he does not even come close to telling your readers how this can come about. His few hints are vapid and baseless. If it were within the power or the desire of the Syrian president they'd have been released long ago. (In Meachum's pretense of knowing it all the president, usually referred to as Hafez Asad, is both "al-Asad" and "Al-Adad" in consecutive paragraphs.)

No matter how baseless it is, no matter how disproven by recent history, Meachum is entitled to the personal belief that capitulating to the blackmail of these fratricidal assassins and terrorists will forever end their kidnapping and slaughter of the innocent. But neither this baseless belief nor the tradition of American journalism which he claims for himself entitle Meachum to make it up as he goes, to become an anti-semitic propagandist and to impose upon your trust and that of your readers. Again I suggest that two columns a day preclude responsible writing and that Meachum ought to spend more time ascertaining *fact*. Even Walter Lippmann, and Meachum is not a Lippmann, did not average three columns a week. Unless he restrains his ego and his pretense of omniscience (and perhaps his assumption that all of us here are uninformed yokels) he will destroy what still remains of his reputation. I sorrow for him.

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